

REMARKS

Claims 1-7 are pending in this application. Claims 8-13 have been added.

The Office Action dated March 22, 2004, has been received and carefully reviewed. In that Office Action, the examiner indicated that claims 1-6 were in condition for allowance; Applicant wishes to thank the examiner for this early indication of allowable subject matter. Claim 7 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph as being indefinite because the phrase "the log operation" lacks antecedent basis. By the above amendment, this issue has been addressed. It is therefore submitted that claim 7 is also in condition for allowance.

New claims 8-13 have been added to further define the invention. Claim 8 requires that "the surround function has a value which changes in a stepwise manner along two orthogonal axes" and, for at least this reason, is believed to distinguish over the prior art. Claims 9-12 depend from claim 8 and are submitted to be allowable for the same reasons as claim 8.

New claim 13 requires a multiscale retinex method for correcting image lightness that includes the steps of:

selecting a subject pixel from a plurality of pixels;
identifying a first plurality of surround pixels related to the subject pixel;

identifying a second plurality of surround pixels related to the subject pixel; and

correcting the lightness of the subject pixel using one-dimensional convolution operations of a surround function and a selected one of the first plurality of surround pixels over a plurality of scales and a selected one of the second plurality of surround pixels over the plurality of scales.

As discussed in the specification from page 12, line 15 to page 13, line 17, the method of the present invention allows a one-dimensional convolution operation to be used in place of a two-dimensional operation. It is respectfully submitted that such use of a one-dimensional convolution operation is not shown or suggested by the prior art, and that, therefore, claim 13 is also allowable over the prior art.

COMMENT ON STATEMENT CONCERNING ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

The Office Action indicates that the prior art of record does not teach of suggest the recited arrangement of an "image-lightening retinex function." Applicant notes that the claims and the specification are directed to a method of correcting image lightness rather than to a method of "lightening" an image. Image lightness can be corrected by increasing image lightness or decreasing image lightness (see, e.g., page 1,

lines 14-21). The pending claims are therefore not limited to an image lightening method as suggested in the Office Action.

CONCLUSION

Each issue raised in the Office Action dated March 22, 2004, has been addressed, and it is believed that claims 1-13 are now in condition for allowance. Wherefore, consideration and allowance of these claims is earnestly solicited.

Conclusion

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Scott Wakeman (Reg. No. 37,750) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By


Terrell C. Birch, #19,382

TCB/STW
0717-444P

P.O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000

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